

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Plaster House  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 117 Plaster House Road N/A not for publication  
city, town Southbury (Southford) N/A vicinity  
state Connecticut code CT county New Haven code 009 zip code 06488

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

[Signature] June 10, 1993  
Signature of certifying official Director, Connecticut Historical Commission Date

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature] 7/29/93  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Entered in the  
National Register

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwellingOTHER/shop

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

COLONIAL/Postmedieval English

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stonewalls stonestuccoroof shakeother \_\_\_\_\_

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Plaster House is an eighteenth-century masonry building in the village of Southford quite near the western border of Southbury (Photograph #s 1, 2). It is located at the intersection of Plaster House and Jeremy Swamp roads in a heavily wooded rural area, with Jeremy Brook immediately downslope to the northeast and Jeremy Swamp Road, an unimproved dirt road forming the southwest border of the property. Jeremy Brook flows into Eight Mile Brook just to the southeast of the property; the latter stream forms part of the Southbury-Oxford border.

The Plaster House is located in an area that was industrialized by the late eighteenth century. There is a stone arched bridge/dam to the north which carries traffic over Plaster House Road and controls the flow of Jeremy Brook. A former millpond, now drained, is located upstream of the bridge/dam and the standing ruins of an old paper mill are found on the opposite side of Jeremy Brook downstream from the house (originally powered by a long canal from Eight Mile Brook). None of these industrial remains are part of this nomination.

The house presently has a three-bay facade, a gambrel roof with shed dormers, and two integral end chimneys. Because of the masonry core of small rubblestone, it is probable that the walls of the building have always been stuccoed. In addition to the atypical end chimneys instead of a central stack, there is other evidence to suggest that it was constructed in two sections, with the left (northeast) side nearer the brook being the earlier. The original structure was probably a gable-roofed end-chimney building with one room and a sleeping loft over a partially excavated cellar. Because of the terrain the cellar under this section has a full-height wall on the end nearest the brook. The entire southwest end gable wall is stone but the northeast gable peak is vertically planked and sheathed with horizontal weatherboard, the latter a modern alteration (Photograph #3). Changes to the exterior of the structure in the 1950s include the addition of a shed dormer at the rear in the lower slope of the gambrel roof, and the installation of casement windows to replace earlier two-over-two double-hung sash. The current double Dutch door at the main entrance is a replacement for an earlier glazed French door.

It is notable that no nineteenth-century maps or deeds in the chain of title identify this building as a house, suggesting that the Plaster House may have been built as a shop, or combination shop and millhouse used seasonally, possibly as early as 1750. Further credence to this theory is found in the floor plan and some of the unusual

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interior features, along with the rare use of stone, uncommon for residential buildings in Connecticut.

The present floor plan essentially divides the house into two rooms, a larger room which serves as a parlor on the southwest end, directly accessed by the front door, and a kitchen, which may have originally been two smaller rooms, on the other end. Another door opens out of the parlor at the rear. Narrow steep stairs to the second floor rise along the inside wall of the parlor from a platform to the left of the main door. The handrail for these stairs is placed at about half the conventional height and appears to date from the late nineteenth century.

In every instance, the fireplace masonry, including the stacks, is partially or fully exposed and not cased in any traditional manner. The most unusual brick fireplace is found on the first floor in what is now the kitchen on the brook side of the house. It is a double fireplace with the fireboxes set at 45 degrees to the wall (Photograph #4). Although it was repaired and rebuilt with new brick circa 1955, photographs taken beforehand show the same configuration and the lack of casing or plaster finish of any kind.<sup>1</sup> In the cellar below, where an old shop door provided access to the outside, the fireplace has a large firebox (57.5" x 47" x 25") and is flanked on the left by a brick oven with a barrel vault rather than the more customary beehive configuration (Photograph #5). Both the size of the opening and the lack of an outside flue for the oven suggest a pre-Revolutionary date for at least this part of the building. A heavy wooden lintel is set into the masonry above the firebox but there are several intervening courses of brick and an iron lintel at the opening. Although the brick below and above the wood lintel is similar, it is possible the original opening was even higher. Angled beams let into the first-floor joists in the ceiling support some of the weight of the kitchen fireplace above. The fireplace in the parlor is similar to the one in the cellar but it is partially cased just as it was prior to the renovation and has a beehive oven to the left of the opening (Photograph #6). A third fireplace, located in a second-floor bedroom above the parlor, is a corner type with a triangular firebox, again rebuilt with new brick in the original exposed configuration (Photograph #7).

1. Double angled fireplaces have been found in Stratford, the parent town of Woodbury, of which Southbury was a part, and this building tradition appears to a limited extent in the Woodbury-Southbury area, but they are normally cased or panelled and are divided by a partition wall, in effect providing heat for two rooms. The only similar fireplaces with exposed masonry known to the author are found in the Bill Store, an early nineteenth-century building in Ledyard, Connecticut.

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

c. 1750 - c. 1780

Significant Dates

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Plaster House is significant as a rare example of stucco and stone construction and is distinguished by its unusual interior features. Structurally and stylistically it demonstrates the evolution of a rural eighteenth-century building over time. Added significance is derived from its well-preserved setting and historic rural ambiance as well as its local historical importance. It is associated with the Hinman family, early settlers of Southbury and the nineteenth-century industrial development of Southford.

### Historical Background

Family tradition holds that this building was constructed by Benjamin Hinman, Jr. (1692-1727), and that his eldest son, Colonel Benjamin (1720-1809), was born here.<sup>1</sup> They were descendants of Edward Hinman, who came to Stratford from England about 1645 and was a founder of Old Woodbury.<sup>2</sup> As his sons came of age they settled on land set out to their proprietor father in the South Parish, now Southbury. His son, Benjamin (1st; 1662-1727), married Elizabeth Lamb of Woodbury in 1684 and they lived at Bullet Hill in Southbury. Their son, Benjamin, Jr. (1692-1727), and his wife, Sarah Sherman, were the parents of Colonel Benjamin, who served with distinction in the French and Indian Wars and as commander of the 13th Regiment at Ticonderoga during the Revolution, owned extensive acreage in Southbury, and represented the town in the state legislature after incorporation in 1787. His children included Aaron, the eldest, later owner of this property and also a state representative for several terms, Colonel Joel, a judge, and Curtiss, a state senator in 1820.

Extensive investigation into the land records failed to confirm the tradition of Colonel Hinman's birthplace but it is clear that this was Hinman property. Aaron Hinman (b. 1747) owned what appears to be this parcel, then part of what was known as Mill or Mills Farm, and granted it in 1813 to his son, Harry (aka Henry; 1791-1850) by deed of gift. It was located on the east side of the highway to Southbury, the present Jeremy Swamp Road, laid out in 1808. That same deed indicates, however, that Aaron, who married a cousin, Ruth Hinman in 1772, lived elsewhere at that time. Harry, who was listed as a farmer at the time of death, was their third and last son. In 1821 Harry's four siblings quitclaimed to him their rights in the remainder of their father's estate, which included the rest of the Mill Farm.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Barbour Collection of Connecticut Vital Records.  
Beers, F. W. Atlas of New Haven County: The Town of Southbury. New York: Beers & Co., 1868.  
Cothren, William F. History of Ancient Woodbury from the First Indian Deed in 1659 to 1871. 3 vols. Waterbury: Bronson Brothers, 1854, 1872; Woodbury: Cothren, 1879.  
Smith, H. & C.T. Map of New Haven County, Connecticut, 1856.  
Southbury: Townwide Architectural Survey (intensive level). Connecticut Historical Commission, 1990-1991 (compiled by Mary McCahon).

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 9.9

**UTM References**

A 

1	18
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6	5	3	1	1	1	0
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4	5	9	10	1	1	3	10
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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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B 

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Zone Easting Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property is described in the Southbury Land Records in Book 259, Page 941, being the same property identified as Block 13, Lot 2, on Southbury Assessor's Map 49.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the above identified and described property included all the land and buildings still associated with the nominated property known as the Plaster House.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By** Reviewed by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator  
name/title Jan Cunningham, National Register Consultant  
organization Cunningham Associates Ltd. date 11/4/92  
street & number 37 Orange Road telephone (203) 347 4072  
city or town Middletown state CT zip code 06457

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After 1835 the nominated property was part of several complicated land transactions which associate the paper mill with the Plaster House and suggest that it was a mill-related building, possibly used by the mill owners as workers' housing, at least in the nineteenth century. That year Harry Hinman sold the water privileges and buildings to Albert Ambler but reserved his shop (some sources say plowshop), the right to 12 square inches of water from the "ditch" from Eight Mile Brook, and the privilege of passage to his shop.<sup>3</sup> By 1849 John Stocking had acquired the shop parcel and had sold it to Ambler. In 1853 Ambler sold both the first parcel with water privileges and the shop parcel to two individuals, Silas Bennet and Truman Wheeler. Later the firm of Hurd and Bartlett, identified as the proprietors of the paper mill on the maps of 1856 and 1868, also leased or owned the nominated building, as well as a second mill downstream. They manufactured straw board and wrapping (made from straw pulp). Adelaide Davis acquired the combined properties in 1886 from James Bartlett and conveyed them to Evelyn Lanehart in 1917. A 1919 deed is recorded to clarify the associated water privileges and affirms the 1/4-mile long canal (the aforementioned ditch) that supplied water from Eight Mile Brook to the old paper mill.

James J. Smith, the owner after 1951, is responsible for the alterations to the then deteriorated building and he photodocumented its condition before restoration.<sup>4</sup> It was acquired by the present owner in 1985, still with attendant water privileges, and was recently subdivided, separating off 2+ acres containing the standing ruins of the former paper mill and a modern studio constructed nearby in 1991-92.

Architectural Significance

Exceptional structural features and an unusual layout distinguish this building from the more conventional eighteenth-century house and give it local significance. Of particular importance are the angled fireplaces, an uncommon configuration for that period. These features, together with its stuccoed masonry construction, make the Plaster House a unique period survival, one that may prove to have statewide significance. Of special importance is the rural setting of the building, enhanced by its isolated brookside location and the unimproved road which runs along the border of the property.

Twentieth-century alterations and repair have been generally sympathetic to the historic character of this building and have not impacted upon the special features that give it significance. While it is regrettable that the original brick could not be used (possibly too deteriorated), the restored fireplaces carefully duplicate the originals in their design. The installation of casement windows, although not appropriate to the period of the building, does not really detract from its overall significance. They are a minor note in the overriding significance of its form and materials.

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1. Considering the wealth and prominence of the Hinman family, this modest dwelling appears to be an unlikely homestead, even though the building may date from the right period. Although it should be noted that J. Frederick Kelly is reported to have examined the building and dated it to the 1720s, the author has found no evidence to indicate a date of construction prior to about 1750.
2. Old Woodbury is the name commonly used to differentiate the larger colonial town (173 square miles) from the smaller present-day Town of Woodbury. Until the late eighteenth century, Old Woodbury also encompassed the parishes which became the towns of Washington (incorporated 1779), Southbury and Bethlehem (both incorporated 1787), and Roxbury (incorporated 1796).
3. The ditch from Eight Mile Brook as the water source precludes the possibility that the referenced "shop" was the Plaster House.
4. Prints of the before photographs were provided to the consultant by the present owner and are filed with the Connecticut Historical Commission.